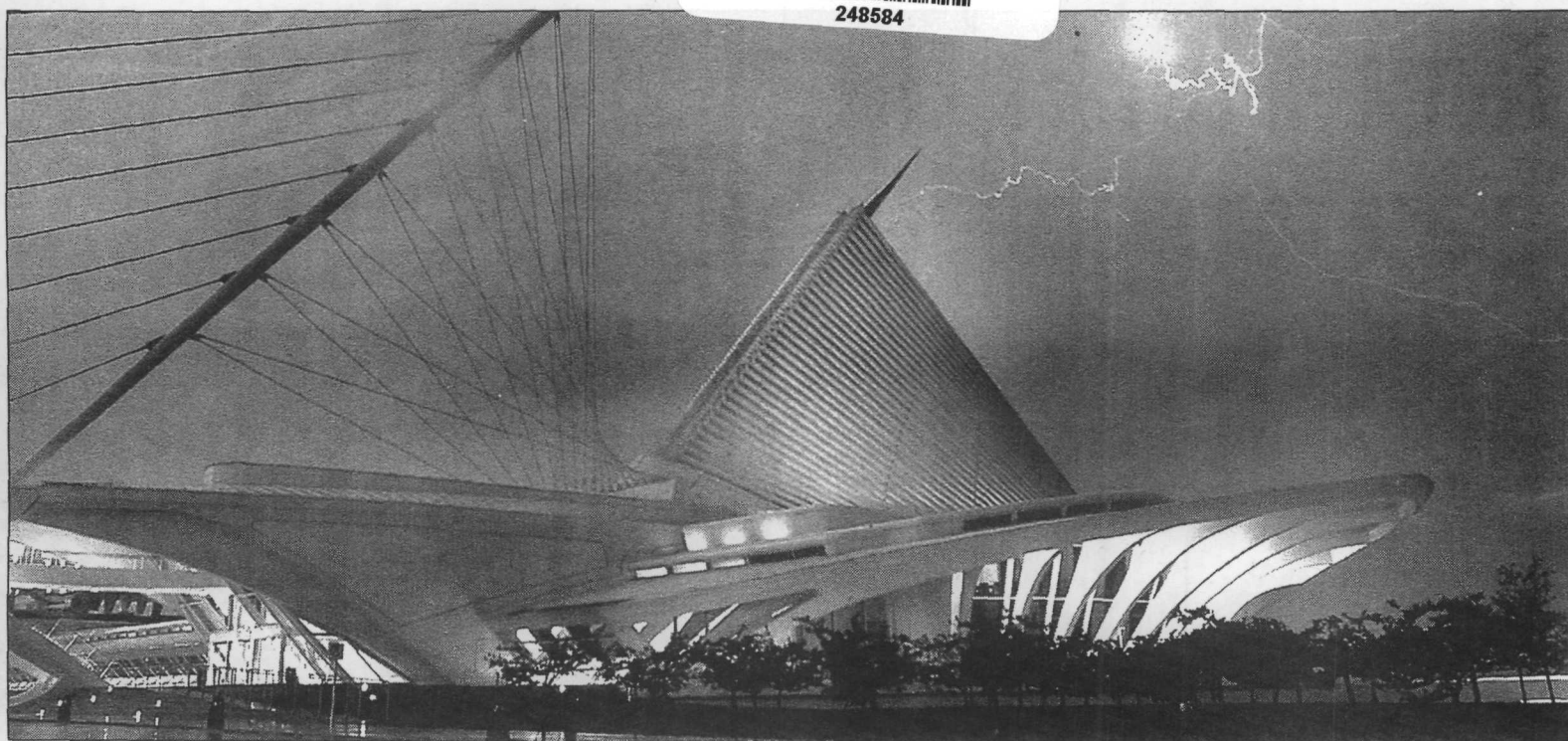
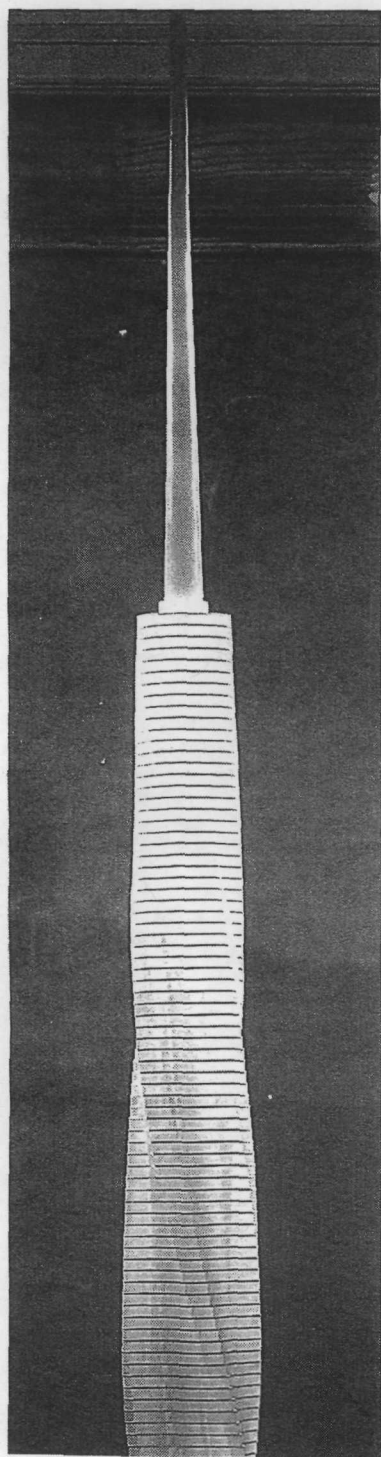




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Lightning flashes in 2002 over the Milwaukee Art Museum addition designed by Santiago Calatrava. —JEFFREY PHELPS/AP

The roots of a tall dream

Proposed spire grew from interaction of architect, developer

BY KEVIN NANCE
Architecture Critic

Of all the reports that have swirled in the worldwide press in the last week since the announcement of the proposed Fordham Spire, a hotel/condo tower on the Chicago lakefront that would be the nation's tallest building, one of

that concrete. But now, suddenly, a lump was forming in his throat.

"I'd never had that kind of experience," Carley says. "I'd usually go, 'Well, OK, beautiful building.' But here, there was a sense of discovery every step of the way."

The question was: Why here? The Carleys had both attended Marquette, and while they both had warm feelings for Milwaukee, they didn't recall it as the sort of place that would have anything remotely like this building.

"It's a very conservative, practical, staid, old German town," he said. "So I'm sitting there going,

GLOBAL DESIGN: Calatrava brightens his hometown of Valencia, Spain. **In Travel**

trava gave an audio-visual presentation of his work around the world, which included bridges, transit stations and a variety of striking buildings, mostly in Europe.

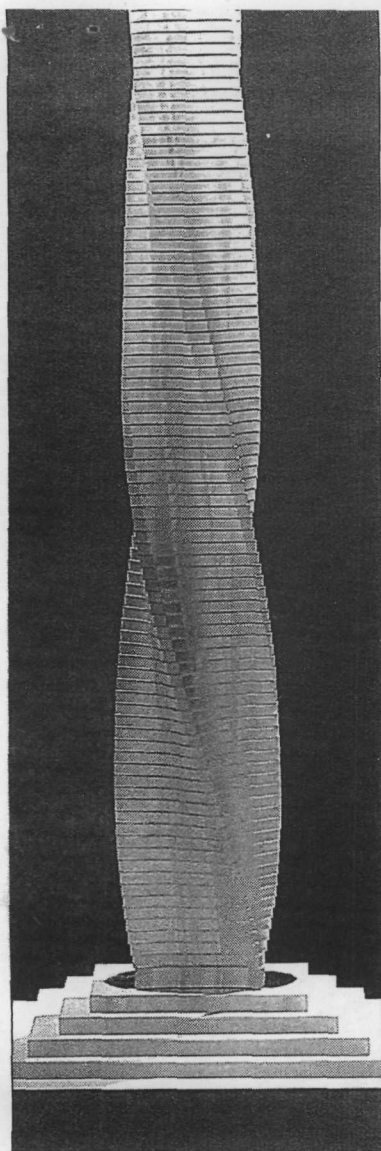
"I was infatuated when I got there," Carley says, "and when I left, I was deeply in love."

Later that night, a reception for Calatrava was to be held across Michigan Avenue at the Borg-Warner Building. Carley lurked near the elevator on the ground floor, waiting to meet

found themselves in Zurich as the guests of Calatrava and his wife, Tina. While their wives were hitting it off, Carley was sweet-talking Calatrava, touting Chicago as the ideal stage for a new project. He waxed eloquent on the city's grand architectural tradition, tossing out every famous name he could think of, from Burnham to Wright to Mies.

Calatrava knew those names very well — he'd visited Chicago at least 40 times over the years and was steeped in its architectural lore — but he let Carley go on and on, if only to gauge his sincerity.

"After 22 years in my profession



"Wouldn't it be great if Chicago had something like [the Calatrava-designed Milwaukee Art Museum]?"

CHRIS CARLEY
Chicago developer

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Of all the reports that have swirled in the worldwide press in the last week since the announcement of the proposed Fordham Spire, a hotel/condo tower on the Chicago lakefront that would be the nation's tallest building, one of the most important stories has received the least attention.

It's the tale of two men — one a world-famous Spanish architect, the other a relatively anonymous Chicago developer named Chris Carley — engaged in a romance, of sorts. You could call it the courtship of Santiago Calatrava, except that it isn't always clear who is courting whom.

The infatuation

"Oh my God," Carley was saying. "Oh my God."

He'd seen photographs of Calatrava's work in books, but now that he and his wife, Nancy, were standing in the dramatic main hall of Calatrava's addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum shortly after it opened in 2001, the reality of it made Carley feel like a 5-year-old who'd just been ushered into Santa's workshop. The curving, vaulted ceiling, the shafts of light lancing in through the windows as if through holes in heavy cloud cover — to Carley, it all seemed fantastic, surreal, miraculous. Outside, the birdlike exterior was somehow both prehistoric and futuristic; even the cantilevered parking garage was...

"Oh my God."

Carley was a businessman, a bottom-line, nuts-and-bolts guy who usually looked at impressive architecture and found himself speculating about engineering, about zoning, about the price of all

that concrete. But now, suddenly, a lump was forming in his throat.

"I'd never had that kind of experience," Carley says. "I'd usually go, 'Well, OK, beautiful building.' But here, there was a sense of discovery every step of the way."

The question was: Why here? The Carleys had both attended Marquette, and while they both had warm feelings for Milwaukee, they didn't recall it as the sort of place that would have anything remotely like this building.

"It's a very conservative, practical, staid, old German town," he said. "So I'm sitting there going, 'How did Milwaukee come up with the first Calatrava building in the country?' And then I thought: 'Wouldn't it be great if Chicago had something like this?'"

At first, Carley didn't think of himself as the developer of a Calatrava building. It took a good half hour before he started thinking the unthinkable, and several more minutes before he dared say it aloud: "Wouldn't it be cool if he did something for me?"

Nancy rolled her eyes, then noticed the dead-serious look in his.

Seeing his wife's alarm, Carley put on a show of laughing off his own question. "I'd give it a one-in-50 chance," he told her.

But as they left, he was thinking to himself: *Calatrava and Carley. I like the sound of that.*

The courtship

A few weeks later, Calatrava gave a talk at the Art Institute of Chicago, and Carley scored a ticket and somehow managed to find a front-row seat. Suddenly, Calatrava himself appeared and waited briefly — about six feet from where Carley was sitting — to be ushered onstage. Seizing the day, Carley leapt up, shook the architect's hand and introduced himself as a local developer, adding: "Love your work."

For the next 90 minutes, Cala-

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Chris Carley
The developer

When Calatrava arrived and entered the elevator, Carley stepped smoothly in next to him, as if by pure chance. "Oh, Mr. Calatrava!"

It was a short elevator ride up to the top-floor Cliff

Dweller's Club, where the reception was already in progress, so Carley worked fast, plying Calatrava with compliments, then baiting the hook: "Wouldn't it be interesting to do a building in Chicago?"

By the time the elevator opened, the architect was intrigued; Carley steered him into a corner for a 10-minute chat. "I'm looking over his shoulder, and of course people are shooting daggers at that S.O.B. taking up all of Calatrava's time," he recalls with a smile. "Finally I said, 'I think I've got to let you go.'"

But Calatrava had his own hook. He scribbled on a scrap of paper for about one minute, then handed it to Carley. On the paper were Calatrava's home phone numbers in Zurich and New York, along with a sketch of a beautiful dove.

The engagement

It wasn't long before the Carleys

found themselves in Zurich as the guests of Calatrava and his wife, Tina. While their wives were hitting it off, Carley was sweet-talking Calatrava, touting Chicago as the ideal stage for a new project. He waxed eloquent on the city's grand architectural tradition, tossing out every famous name he could think of, from Burnham to Wright to Mies.

Calatrava knew those names very well — he'd visited Chicago at least 40 times over the years and was steeped in its architectural lore — but he let Carley go on and on, if only to gauge his sincerity.

"After 23 years in my profession,

I've arrived to the conviction that there's no way to have a wonderful building if you don't have a person who wants to have it," Calatrava says. "If somebody has no ambition and no vision, it's very difficult. But what I understood by Mr. Carley was that he was a real lover of the city and passionate about doing something exceptional there."

Still, as the weeks and months wore on, Calatrava appeared skeptical — partly because an earlier, unrelated plan for him to design a series of pedestrian bridges over Lake Shore Drive had gone sour. More important, he didn't care for any of Carley's site proposals, including one at Superior and Rush, across from the Peninsula Hotel.

Then, after several more months of casting about, Carley hit upon a new site in the 400 block of East North Water between Navy Pier and the mouth of the Chicago River at Lake Michigan.

It was Calatrava's turn to fall in love. "I thought, 'This is a place in which something exceptional can happen.' I was waiting for the right site at the right time. This is it, and the moment is there."

Carley and Calatrava.
He liked the sound of it.



Santiago Calatrava
The architect